

# **Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System**

## **Externship Opportunities**

Below are several externship opportunities offered at the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System (SLVHCS) for the 2023-2024 training year. If an applicant has more than one interest, please state this in the application. Training hours per week are negotiable. Applications are due **Monday, March 20<sup>th</sup> 2023**. A 2-3 month onboarding time is required should an applicant be selected.

If you are interested in being considered for any of the externship placements, please contact Christopher Parkinson, Ph.D., ABPP via email ([Christopher.Parkinson@va.gov](mailto:Christopher.Parkinson@va.gov)) and include a letter of interest indicating desired placement(s) and a current CV. Additionally, please have your Director of Training complete the externship readiness form and submit to Dr. Parkinson directly.

Thank you for your interest in the SLVHCS externship program!

1. **Health Psychology & Behavioral Medicine** (New Orleans: 1-2 positions)  
(Baton Rouge: 1 position)

**Supervisor(s)**: Emily Ibert, Ph.D.; Christopher R. L. Parkinson, Ph.D., ABPP; Royce Butler, Ph.D.

**Availability**: Full Academic Year, Summer (New Orleans)

Full Academic Year (Baton Rouge)

**Hours**: 4 – 20 hours per week

In health psychology and behavioral medicine, externs function as consultants on the psychosocial and behavioral aspects of disease expression, control, and prevention in addition to providing brief, solution-focused behavioral health treatment for adjustment issues and less severe mental illness.

- Primary Care-Mental Health Integration
  - Brief solution-focused treatment for depression, anxiety, and adjustment issues
  - Health coaching for health promotion & disease prevention utilizing motivational interviewing
  - Treatment of chronic pain and anger management in primary care setting
- Interdisciplinary Palliative Care
  - Assessment of psychological and cognitive functioning in the context of an interdisciplinary team
  - Individual therapy to address adjustment to disease, symptom management, and transition to end-of-life
  - Experience with providing consultation to other health professionals

Full Academic Year (New Orleans):

Trainees applying for a position in New Orleans have the opportunity to obtain experiences in **primary care-mental health integration (PCHMI)** with **Dr. Ibert** (50%) and **interdisciplinary palliative care** with **Dr. Parkinson** (50%) if applying for a full year experience.

Summer Experience (New Orleans):

If applying for a Summer experience, trainees will be working with **Dr. Ibert only**. This option will be higher hours per week due to shorter overall duration.

Full Academic Year (Baton Rouge):

Trainees in Baton Rouge will obtain experience in **PCMHI** with **Dr. Butler**.

2. **Integrated Inpatient and Outpatient Treatment** (New Orleans: 1 position)

**Supervisors:** Chelsea Ennis, Ph.D.; Desirae Vidaurri, Ph.D.; Jessica Walton, Ph.D.

**Availability:** Full Academic Year

**Hours:** 4 – 20 hours per week

Externs working within this rotation will have the opportunity to work in both outpatient and inpatient settings at SLVHCS.

Inpatient Mental Health:

With Veterans admitted to inpatient mental health, the emphasis is placed on adapting empirically supported treatments for short-term delivery. The focus of training will be on learning a modular approach to flexibly apply evidence-based treatments, particularly from a cognitive behavioral perspective, to a broad range of diagnoses. Trainees will gain experience in assessment, and brief individual & group psychotherapy in the acute setting.

- Leading or co-leading group therapy, tailoring empirically supported treatments, particularly from a cognitive behavioral perspective
- Exposure to cognitive behavioral therapies, including Dialectical Behavior Therapy, and other complementary treatments such as Motivational Interviewing
- Collaboration with other mental health professionals, such as psychiatry, pharmacy, social work, and nursing, within an integrated team

Outpatient Mental Health (PTSD Clinic):

Veterans receiving services in this program are combat Veterans from WWII, Korean conflict, Vietnam, the 1st Gulf War, and Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND), as well as Veterans from peacekeeping missions and those Veterans who experienced non-combat trauma. This training experience will focus primarily on providing evidence-based psychotherapy (EBP) for trauma.

- Experience providing prolonged exposure (PE)
- Experience providing cognitive processing therapy (CPT)
- Opportunities to provide cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) for depression & insomnia

- Opportunities to provide Imagery Rehearsal Therapy (IRT) for nightmares

3. **Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC)** (Baton Rouge: 1 position)  
(Slidell: 1 position)

**Supervisor(s):** William “Bill” Schmitz Jr., Psy.D.; Meghan Borne, PhD; Dustin Seidler, PhD

**Availability:** Full Academic Year

**Hours:** 4 – 20 hours per week

The Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System (SLVHCS) is comprised of a primary medical facility in New Orleans and 7 community-based outpatient clinics (CBOC). CBOCs function to provide medical and mental health care to Veterans, typically in more rural areas of our system. As CBOCs are located further from the main campus, trainees will typically see a wide-range of presenting concerns. Trainees will have the opportunity to work in our Baton Rouge clinic with Dr. Bill Schmitz and Dr. Meghan Borne or our Slidell clinic with Dr. Dustin Seidler.

**Baton Rouge CBOC:**

- Conduct initial evaluations for Veterans seeking outpatient treatment
- Develop skills in case formulation, differential diagnosis, and treatment planning
- Administration of psychological assessments for diagnostic clarification and assessment of treatment effectiveness
- Evidence-based treatments for individuals and groups (behavioral activation for depression, PTSD, ACT, pain management, insomnia, CAMS, etc.)
- Consultation and collaboration with primary and specialty care providers for psychological intervention and behavioral management of medical concerns
- Coordination of comprehensive mental health services (e.g. substance abuse, homeless program etc.) within context of multidisciplinary team

**Slidell CBOC:**

- This externship placement emphasizes the development of skills needed to integrate psychological services within interdisciplinary treatment teams in rural or suburban medical contexts. Major components of this placement include:
  - Brief evaluation and treatment of clinical and health psychology problems;
  - Triage decision-making to prioritize service delivery; consultation and collaboration with primary care providers for psychological and medical management;
  - Psychological assessment, individual and group psychotherapy;
  - Referral to specialty mental health programs, and coordination of care with the onsite psychiatrist/mental health staff.
- Working within the framework of the Ambulatory Mental Health Clinic (AMH), the mental health staff at the Slidell CBOC provide comprehensive mental health services to Veterans suffering from issues related to anxiety, mood, personality, adjustment, grief, and psychosis. Externs will conduct initial evaluations for Veterans

seeking treatment, which will develop abilities in case formulation, differential diagnosis, and treatment planning. Externs will administer psychological assessments for diagnostic clarification and treatment planning purposes, as well as provide brief, short-term behavioral interventions to improve health and daily functioning. Clinical writing skills will be developed throughout the rotation. Externs will provide evidence-based psychotherapy to Veterans and participate in group therapy (observing or co-facilitating depending on ability level).

4. **Research** (New Orleans/Remote: 1 position)

**Supervisors:** Joseph W. Boffa, Ph.D.; Claire Houtsma, Ph.D.; Amanda M. Raines, Ph.D.

**Availability:** Full Academic Year

**Hours:** 8 hours per week

Externs may participate in a research rotation within SLVHCS's Psychology Service. Students may work with one or all of the aforementioned supervisors. Activities while on the rotation may include but are not limited to: 1) data entry and management; 2) administering research protocol to Veteran participants; 3) supervised peer-review for scientific journals; 4) secondary data analysis; and 5) manuscript preparation for co-authorship. Below you will find information about each supervisors area of research interest.

**Dr. Boffa's** research focuses on cognitive-affective variables that intersect PTSD and suicide risk as well as the development of novel interventions to target these conditions.

**Dr. Houtsma's** research focuses on suicidal behavior, with three related areas of emphasis – the role of firearms in suicide, capability for suicide, and sociocultural influences on suicide risk. Dr. Houtsma is interested both in understanding risk factors for suicide and developing scalable, Veteran-led interventions to prevent suicide.

**Dr. Raines's** research focuses on identifying and empirically examining transdiagnostic risk and maintenance factors (e.g., anxiety sensitivity), as well as the development of novel interventions that can be used to treat and prevent anxiety and related pathology including PTSD, suicide, and substance use.

5. **Suicide Prevention** (New Orleans: 1 position)

**Supervisor:** Dian Evans, JD, Ph.D., MSCP

**Availability:** Full Academic Year

**Hours:** 8 hours per week

The Suicide Prevention team works closely with mental health and healthcare providers throughout SLVHCS to coordinate care for Veterans deemed high risk for suicide. This includes managing the high-risk list to ensure that Veterans are being seen within the high-risk protocol guidelines; following-up with Veterans in the SLVHCS catchment area who have reached out to the Veterans Crisis Line (VCL); and consulting with providers on complex cases where suicide risk

is a concern. Suicide Prevention team members act as consultants on protocols and procedures related to suicide prevention and investigate reports of patient suicides. Externs will learn from the VA's nationally recognized "best practices" in suicide prevention, working alongside the suicide prevention staff with Veterans determined to be at high risk for suicide. Specific training opportunities include:

- Responding to consults placed by the VCL to provide follow-up care to Veterans in crisis
- Working with Veterans on the high risk for suicide list to assess risk and ensure continuity of care
- Conducting brief therapy with high-risk patients
- Assisting in the completion of a root cause analysis related to patient suicides for presentation to VA leadership